



## **Administrative Professionals Staffing Practices**

### **Introduction**

This paper provides benchmark data on the relationships of the number of administrative professionals to the number of total employees, the number of executives that administrative professionals support and related information. The sources of information for this report consists of a survey of members of the New England Compensation Consortium (NECC), Benchmarking Survey conducted by the International Association of Administrative Professionals, and a report on administrative professionals from the Bureau of Labor statistics.

### **Bureau of Labor Statistics**

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, there were 3.9 million administrative assistants in jobs in 2014, the largest occupations in the U.S. economy. Employment in the detailed occupations of the secretaries and administrative assistants group in 2014 was distributed as follows:

<b>Category</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Growth 2014-2024</b>
Secretaries and administrative assistants, except legal, medical, and executive	2,457,000	Increase 3%, slower than average for all occupations
Executive secretaries and executive administrative assistants	776,600	Decline, 6% due to technology enabling managers to perform many administrative functions
Medical secretaries	527,600	Increase 21%, due to the growth of the healthcare industry
Legal secretaries	215,500	Decline, 6% due to technology enabling paralegals to prepare and file documents

### **New England Compensation Consortium Survey Results**

Twelve organizations responded to the special survey sent to over 200 NECC members in June 2009. The following is the data associated with the questions asked.

#### **How many total full time equivalent employees are there in your organization?**

- Average            6,199
- Median            3,309
- 25<sup>th</sup>                1,421
- 75<sup>th</sup>                7,059

- High 23,656
- Low 461

**How many full time equivalent Administrative Assistants, Executive Assistants, Secretaries, etc. are there in your organization?**

- Average 156
- Median 118
- 25<sup>th</sup> 24
- 75<sup>th</sup> 262
- High 479
- Low 14

If the number of administrative professionals is divided into the number of employees for each organization and the various percentiles are calculated, there is one administrative professional for every 34 employees at the median and one for every 42 employees on average as described below:

- Average 1:42 employees
- Median 1:34 employees
- 25<sup>th</sup> 1:26 employees
- 75<sup>th</sup> 1:54 employees
- High 1:91 employees
- Low 1:15 employees

**Indicate if your company is for-profit or not-for-profit**

- For Profit 7
- Not for Profit 5

Not-For-Profit of the above statistics are as follows:

	<u># Employees</u>	<u># Administrative</u>	<u>Ratio</u>
Average	2,385	115	1:30
Median	1,728	30	1:26
25 <sup>th</sup>	500	19	1:20
75 <sup>th</sup>	2,822	189	1:33
High	6,412	322	1:58
Low	461	14	1:15

For-Profit of the above statistics are as follows:

	<u># Employees</u>	<u># Administrative</u>	<u>Ratio</u>
Average	8,924	186	1:51
Median	4,384	152	1:39
25 <sup>th</sup>	3,033	54	1:33
75 <sup>th</sup>	13,935	274	1:66
High	23,656	479	1:91

Low

494

16

1:25

**Describe your primary industry**

The reported industry for each organization was used to categorize the organization into a general industry category:

▪ Insurance	3
▪ Education	1
▪ Healthcare	2
▪ Life Sciences	1
▪ Manufacturing	2
▪ Research and Development	1
▪ Retail	1
▪ Technology	1

**Indicate your last fiscal year's revenue or operating revenue if not-for profit.**

▪ Average	\$	4,069,000,000
▪ Median	\$	1,189,000,000
▪ 25 <sup>th</sup>	\$	658,000,000
▪ 75 <sup>th</sup>	\$	1,870,000,000
▪ High	\$	23,000,000,000
▪ Low	\$	350,000,000

**How would you describe your organization's practice for staffing Administrative Assistants to individuals, departments, locations or functional areas?**

The following are selected comments received from several of the participating organizations with editing if needed to maintain the organizational confidentiality:

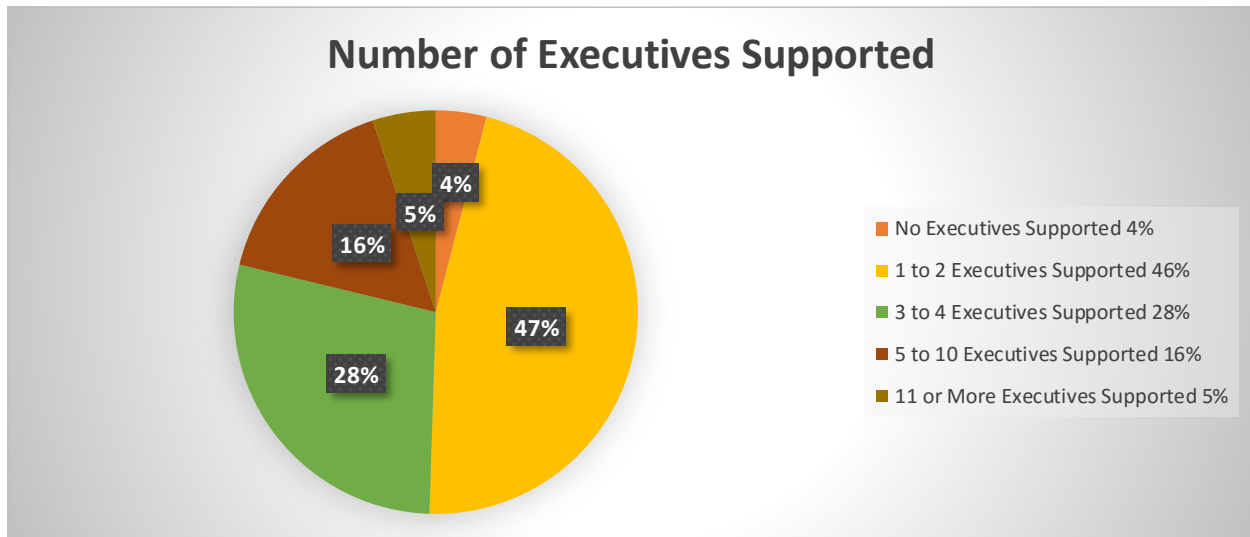
- "Our practice is not based on a certain number or ratio; it's based on need and appropriateness of the position. Not every department has an administrative assistant and we challenge our managers on looking at all positions to see if it's possible to do things different and consolidate when appropriate."
- "Requests for administrative professionals are reviewed on a case by case basis. Most of vice presidents have administrative assistants, but not all. If they do, they generally have responsibility for the whole department. A couple of the larger departments have more than one assistant."
- "There is no consistent practice at our organization. All senior management, most vice presidents, and some director-level managers have administrative professionals. Administrative professionals for those below the vice president level tend to be used more broadly for group support."
- "Department heads and key staff typically have administrative assistants."
- "Administrative professional jobs are difficult to count because they have evolved into hybrid jobs with both administrative and other responsibilities under a different title, e.g., Human Resources Assistant."

- "Culture and technology have a significant impact on the number of administrative professionals. If the senior positions are not technologically savvy, then they tend to have more need for administrative professionals."
- "There are no standard practices currently - typically offices by major location have an office coordinator in them coordinating and supporting all workers in that area (processing HR paperwork, finance reimbursements, time reporting, etc.)"

### International Association of Administrative Professionals

In 2013, 3,394 members and non-members of the International Association of Administrative Professionals (IAAP) responded to a request to participate in a benchmarking survey designed to gather current data on job titles, key responsibilities, average salaries, job satisfaction, technology usage, training needs, other key issues relating to today's administrative professionals and the number of executives supported.

IAAP reports that most administrative professionals report support one or two executives, 28% support 3 to 4 and 21% support 5 or more.<sup>2</sup>



### Summary

The number of administrative support staff that an organization has depends on a variety of factors. The smaller the number of employees in an organization, the smaller the number of administrative professionals tends to be. Findings from the NECC survey indicate that the number of functional areas, office locations, senior management, culture, and the level of technological knowledge and ability senior management uses in their jobs also impacts the number of administrative professionals. Usually administrative professionals support not only a

senior manager but also the whole department. In addition, administrative work is often combined with another role, resulting in a hybrid job and no longer part of the administrative professional job family.

The most significant findings relative to the number of administrative professionals in an organization is that 46% administrative professionals support one or two executives. There is one administrative professional for every 34 to 42 employees. The growth in administrative assistants is expected to slow down or decline (except for medical secretaries) due to technology improvements and the ability of other positions to perform some of the functions previously performed by administrative assistants.

<sup>1</sup>Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, *Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2014-15 Edition*, Secretaries and Administrative Assistants, on the Internet at <http://www.bls.gov/ooh/office-and-administrative-support/secretaries-and-administrative-assistants.htm#tab-1> (visited all September 15, 2016).

<sup>2</sup>International Association of Administrative Professionals, IAAP 2013 Benchmarking Survey, on the internet at [https://www.nesacenter.org/uploaded/conferences/SEC/2014/handouts/Rick\\_Detwiler/3\\_Detwiler\\_Resources.pdf](https://www.nesacenter.org/uploaded/conferences/SEC/2014/handouts/Rick_Detwiler/3_Detwiler_Resources.pdf) (visited September 15, 2016).